WRITTEN in FLORENCE

THE LAST VERSES OF HUGH McCULLOCH

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S/S

-OLIVE-PERCIVAL-
Her Book

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WRITTEN IN FLORENCE

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Hugh McCulloch.
From a painting by Stephen Hills Parker.

Written in Florence

The Last Verses of

HUGH McCULLOCH

AUTHOR OF

'THE QUEST OF HERACLES'

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TO HIS SISTER
FROM HIS FRIEND

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PRELUDE

In vain I read each sentence o'er and o'er,
Weighing each meditated cadence well.
The issues of my hours of labour tell
Me all too plainly I can do no more;
'Tis useless longer on the words to pore;
My art has done its utmost. These must go
Even as they are, to flutter to and fro,
As many thousand waifs have gone before.

Yes, I have done my utmost; and how far
The work is from the work I thought to do
When first I fashioned it within my brain!
Yet, crude with imperfections as they are,
I love the verses, knowing how they grew
Through labour, discontentment, and through pain.

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NOVEMBER IN FLORENCE

THE Gods are prodigal of glorious days :
Yet surely, of all days mine eyes have known
This is the loveliest. Each separate stone
In all this matchless city, old and fair,
The wonder-working sun hath rendered rare
By pouring on it his transcendent rays.

A moment since, and I was offering praise
To God within a many-historied fane
Painted by men of old, who live again
In every heart now bending to adore
The holy thoughts which held the earth, before
Our turn had come, to walk our devious ways.

Now, from the hallowed dimness of that place
Thrice blessed by God, I come, the service done,
Into the splendid empire of the sun,
And feel anew transported by his might.
Within, I worshipped dimly in dim light ;
Without, I know God's presence face to face.

I cannot pray—nay, I can scarcely feel;
The sense fails under my intense delight.
The city swims before my rapturous sight
Like an enchanted pageant of our dreams.
God shows His presence in the golden gleams
Which windows, towers, and pinnacles reveal.

I have no words to paint the loveliness . . .
The river seems of heavenly waters made,
Not earthly; underneath the bridges' shade
Like an apocalyptic gem it lies.
The palaces, aspiring to the skies,
Soar radiant with unwonted graciousness.

Spirit of Beauty! thou hast deigned to bless
Mine eyes with visions manifold and fair;
But surely here thou hast thy dwelling, where
Some God-sent charm transfigures everything;
Yea, need'st must dwell where Autumn is as Spring,
Where even Winter brings a soft caress,
And all the flowers of art together cling.

ON PASSING THE AZORES

To Stephen Hills Parker

A CLOUD arose from out a mass of cloud,
  And grew and grew, across the troubled sea;
Became a mountain in a pale grey shroud,—
  A shape of unimagined phantasy.

We neared, and it became a mass of green,
  A towering island, to the topmost crown
With verdure covered; and the fields between,
  White hamlets to the sea came stretching down.

This faded when another peak revealed
  Its splendour to us from another shore;
A crown of clouds its topmost height concealed;
  Red cliffs upheld it from the breakers' roar.

All day we sailed beneath such magic isles;
  Each moment brought us some fantastic view:
A jutting headland, lava heaped in piles,
  Green trees with whitened belfries peeping through.

Foam-girdled, basking in a vanished time,
The isles, unconscious of our later years,
Lay beautiful as snatches of old rhyme
Murmured when eyes suffuse with happy tears.

And as Terceira paled, the setting sun
Burst forth to catch it in his mighty hold,
And left for memory, when the day was done,
One cliff sheer-rising in a mist of gold.

AT CORDOBA

I

The Town

HERE was the mightiest triumph of the Moor
In Western lands. He built a town to be
The rival of the East in majesty,
Whose grace should civilise the Western boor.

While strength his world-wide empire rendered sure
Of Christians he made thralls, and in this place
Fashioned the noblest dwelling of his race;—
What city, even in Spain, is now so poor?

Yea, stately Cordoba hath fallen low.
The Moslem towns are built on shifting sand
Mingled with blood. The British sentinels call
In Cairo. What 's Baghdad or Samarcand?—
Triumphing Giaours through their courtyards go,
While proud Stamboul is tottering to her fall.

II

The Mosque

Pillars and pillars stretch on every hand,
Signs of some far Ideal: pillars torn
From temples of the old religions born;
Cast here together by a conquering tide.
Here, aspiration was for empire wide
On earth—no soaring into the unknown,
No passionate yearning for a heavenly throne—
This Moslem art was one of earthly pride.

But now, the infinite pillared isles athwart,
The incense circleth, and the sound of prayer;
The Gothic choir aspireth to the sky.
The Moor hath yielded to an alien art;
His sword lies broken in the Mihrab, where
The Crucifix is borne triumphing by.

YOUTH AND LOVE

YOUTH and age declare
(The one with hopes and fears,
The other with glad tears)
That life and love are one.

They say we should not care
Though glory we have missed,
If we but once have kissed
Our own predestined fair.

The world hath time to spare;
Eternal is the sun:
When *we* have lost or won
We go—we know not where.

Eternal is the sun,
But we are mortal, we!
On earth our lives are free—
But when this life is done?

And life is brief at best;
And when our thread is spun
Shall we not curse the sun
If we have not caressed?

The wisest monarch saith
  That all in vain is care;
  That learning is despair
And wisdom only breath.

And who, then, ventureth
  To brave the Gods above?
  For life was made for love . . .
As love was made for death!

IN FEBRUARY

THE trees, all dripping since the tardy dawn
With dewy rain drops fathered in the night,
Half shuddered, shedding on the mossy lawn
Their drops of light.

The many branches seen against the sky
(That rain-dark grey against the unclouding blue!),
That forest multitude which stretched on high,
Made earth seem new.

And we two wandering 'midst the craven trees,
Together close, my arm about you thrown,
Our eyes made dreamy by the rain-wet breeze—
We felt alone.

The world was maddened by some subtile sting;
Some last resistance to supreme despair
Crushing to life each gently slumbering thing
Which languished there.

Our spirits, drowsy in their fleshly tomb,
Half rose to life, and half they seemed to know
The wonders which from Nature's mighty womb
Were soon to grow;

Half knew where, in the vast abyss of time,
  Their past had been, and what their name and place;
Their monstrous deeds;—where sung in buried rhyme
  Their primal grace.

The naked boughs which hung a-quivering there,
  Which shrank with fear through all their vague delight,
Were yet compelled to yield, compelled to bear,
  By Nature's might.

Our souls, however, seemed like things apart;
  They turned again, for not yet was the dawn.
Desire, the Spring sent quivering through the heart;—
  The soul slept on.

FREEDOM

NOT that the world is full of care and sorrow,
Not that the clouds have overspread the sunshine,
Nor yet that pleasure fleeteth in a moment
Hath made me mournful;

For joy hath still a place 'mid all our trouble,
Clouds are like smoke, and must away ere morning,
And grief and sorrow both are only transient,
Even as all things.

But I am sad because the life about us,
Full of its hope and joy, and disappointment,
Cometh for aye to thrust our souls asunder,
O my belovèd.

We are but twain upon this present planet
Clothed with the garments of a stale convention,
Who had been one, if God had made us stronger—
As when in Eden!

If we could steep us in primeval sunshine,
Plunge in the freshness of a morning river,
Salute with ecstasy the golden noonday
Linked with each other . . .

Could wander forth among the beasts, our brothers,
Feel with their senses in the whispering forest
And understand with them the woodland murmurs
(Mystical symbols!),

Forgot the shackles of an outworn culture!—
Each would be naked to the inner vision
Of each, as in our race's far beginnings:
Free as aforetime.

SEARCH

LET us go seek the sun. This sullen sky
With storm-clouds drifting slowly one by one
Weighs on my heart till I am like to die.
Let us go seek the sun!

Ah, somewhere in some hollow of the hills,
'Twixt rocky cliff and boundless, tireless sea,
Bright with the sun and green with murmuring rills,
A Paradise is spread for you and me.

There Death and Love come (they are brothers there,
In that strange land which smiles for evermore);
Death the same Death we knew, so fierce and fair,
But Love wears not the guise which once he wore.

There Love is mightier than the Love we know;
There Love is older than he used to be:
The wavering youth is grown a man; and oh,
He has the untiring passion of the sea!

Let us go seek the sun, and, sailing forth,
Reach lands where life seems ever just begun.
Why linger in this quickly-aging North?
Let us go seek the sun.

IN MARCH

AT daybreak the wind from the West flung full in the face of the sun ;
At evening it scattered the spice which maddened the heart of the day :
And now, in the fallen night, when its passionate moments are done,
The memory left to the world gives life to the breath in our clay.

Scarce can I cling to the earth as I walk in the woods and the fields.
My heart leaps up as I gaze on the luminous planets which roll
Serene in the Heavens above—Valhalla ringed-round with bright shields ;—
The Spirit of Odin the Goer has entered and mastered my soul.

And it's oh! that I wandered afar in the purple great plains of the West,
Hoary with ruins of old, abandoned to devil and beast ;
To breathe the desolate air of a lonely, a mystical quest
For secrets imperfectly known to the God-endowed seers of the East.

And oh! that I wandered alone, and near to the heart of the earth,
In the dew-laden forests which stretch from the mountains sheer unto the sea,
Were one with the heavy dank air wherein Death is the neighbour of Birth;—
Then might I gaze at the past, and guess at the future to be.

Or even to wander alone in the age-hidden tropical isles
Where men are as simple and wild as the waves which incessantly roll;
Feel the joy of mere life—be at one with Nature who suffers and smiles;—
The Spirit of Odin the Goer has entered and mastered my soul.

But no! though my spirit is fain to traverse the wide space of the world—
To gaze on its infinite might—my soul is chained fast in its clay.
My spirit would feel itself one with the Cosmos about me whirled;—
For the wind from the westward blowing has maddened my heart to-day.

OBSESSION

I HAD a vivid dream of hidden might.
Methought I said my incantations well;
My brain was master of a potent spell
To gild with corn the fallow fields of night.
Athwart the darkness flashed a gleam of light;
My room was filled with shapes from Heaven and Hell.
They fawned upon me, and I bade them tell
Their wisdom, glory, ignorance, and fright.

The outlines of their forms I could not see,
I could not understand the words they said;
The spells which called them could not make them flee.
And still surrounding me with shapes of dread,
They who obeyed me once now master me,
And life is like a vigil with the dead.

IN APRIL

THE sun is routing the clouds which cling
To the mountain glades where thrushes sing,
And haggard old Winter scurries away
Before the amorous coming of Spring.

And men and women shouting aloud
Follow her steps in a jocund crowd.
'Ho, for the Spring, the Spring!' they cry,
And toss to Winter his desolate shroud.

Come! and on flowering fields recline
To drain a measure of blood-red wine.
Let blood of the grape with the blood of man
Mingle in mystical marriage divine.

Then from the throng of men retire
(For the breath of Spring turns blood to fire)
And under the scented hedges hide
To ravish the kisses of your desire.

Aloft in the light of the round moon's trail
Exults the love of the nightingale.
And you, pressed close to the world's great heart,
Are one with it while the planets pale.

And oh, for the joy which smacks of pain
And the madness which follows the madness slain!
The redolent lips and the breasts of Spring,
And the golden glory of Nature's reign.

AN IDYLL

A LITTLE isle, the river rippling by,
Thick willows growing from the greyish sand
To make a quivering screen around the strand,
Within, naught seen except the sunny sky.
Inside the screen the well beloved and I
Have hidden, swimming from the neighbouring land;
And now, together sitting, hand in hand,
Dare bid defiance to each envious eye.

The river, surging like the troubled world,
Like that same world with all its toil and fret,
Is barred from entrance to our sacred bower.
All care, all thoughts, far, far from us are whirled,
Except the glory we can ne'er forget,
That we and Love are sovereigns of this hour.

SONNETS TO HELEN

I

My God, she loves me! Why—I know not why.
Friendship, regard, and kindly interest, yes;
But what in me to love I cannot guess
Except my longing wake an answering cry.
Should you not say that sooner yonder sky
Would stoop unto that mountain's coy caress?
And yet she loves me! Ah, the happiness,
While all the careless world goes drifting by.

Dearest, I sometimes think, with bated breath,
What payment God will ask me for the bliss
My life hath tasted in thy love and thee?
Well, save the deep forgetfulness of death,
There is no pain which, brightened by thy kiss,
Could dull the joy of this felicity.

II

I do not know that others think her fair—
  Nay, whether she be beautiful to me.
  With her, I only know that it is she;
Absent, but grieve that she is other where.
Ah, Love is blind! I hear the fools declare
  Whom God has blinded for their enmity
  Towards Love. I know that Love has power to see
As things are seen in God's veracious air.

If I could choose a semblance out of those
  Inherited from all antiquity—
Of all the carnal loveliness which glows
  Since Helen filled with sails the midland sea—
No form so dear as hers could life disclose:
  I love, I *love* her—'tis enough for me.

III

Perhaps we are unusual, you and I ;
  It may be that our temperaments have hurled
  A wall between us and the outer world,
The piercing which were vain for us to try.
'Tis certain that we pass disdainful by
  An hundred things which other men hold dear,
  Our straining eyes on Art—who seems so near,
Tho' high her temple in the gleaming sky.

And yet, I think our chiefest joy is this :
  Our pulses beat like those of all the rest
    When soul drinks soul from out the other's eyes.
  In our humanity we two are blessed,
Having the selfsame rapture in a kiss
    Which Eve and Adam knew in Paradise.

IV

I do not say I never loved before. . . .
  It were not true; to you I cannot lie.
  My soul is open as the wind-swept sky
To you, and o'er its secrets you may pore.
But this I know: in women loved before
  I felt some lack, the which I must supply
  Idealising. Now they hasten by . . .
Those thin abstractions fade for evermore.

Not women they, they were but shades of dreams.
  I loved them for what I bestowed, not they.
But you—why, every single moment gleams
  With your reality as with the day!
I love what is, not what in fancy seems;
  A very woman, gold, and iron, and clay.

MADRIGAL

Azaleas with petals red or white
Which promise springtime and the birth of May
Are my delight.

Too proud for perfume, joyously they say:
'Behold how coward Winter slinks away
Since we have brought the Spring to every glen!'

The Spring has come. The sky has lost the grey
Which hung as heavy on the hearts of men.
The whole world revels with the sun again
In work and play.

Azaleas with petals red or white
Bring ever to my inner eyes the sight
Of Madeleine.

RONDEL

THROUGH Bokhara to Samarcand
  Who will ride and ride with me?
  The glittering Orient to see
Beyond the Oxus' yellow strand.

To mingle with many a motley band,
  Make brothers of high and low degree—
Through Bokhara to Samarcand
  Who will ride and ride with me?

But he must be brave, and quick of hand,
  And strong to slay, and young, and free,
  Who dares to cross that wondrous sea
Of gold and love and death and sand. . . .
Through Bokhara to Samarcand
  Who will ride and ride with me?

INVOCATION

SPIRIT of all inordinate desires!
  This is the languid melancholy hour
  When I am bowed beneath thy wayward power
And shrink before thine ineffectual fires.

What can I do? My restless sense aspires
  Unto some strange and unimagined bower
  Of bliss, enshrined in poisoned tree and flower,
Where love befools the lover whom it tires.

What can I do? I am so slight a prey,
  For mine allegiance thou canst not care;
    So be my helper thou, and set me free!
    Think not I rest a willing thrall to thee,
I, who will strive until I break away,
  Though prisoned in the Castle of Despair.

IN AUGUST

THE sun and sky above the afternoon
Had bent and hovered with wide stifling wings.
My spirit, like a stagnant old lagoon,
Swarmed with suggestions of forgotten things.

I wandered through the fervent quivering heat
Into the orchard where the long brown grass
Crackled with drought beneath my vagrant feet,
Crying aloud to feel the rain-god pass.

Methought the beating in the world-heart ceased;
All time and place to me appeared the same;
I lost the God-head, groping for the priest,
And deemed alike of honour and of shame.

Then of a sudden, just before me, near,
A lazy snake lay in a sinuous line.
The living thing which most I hate and fear
Gleamed to me with a radiance divine.

I flung me down beside the monstrous thing,
And fondled it and kissed its flattened head;
It wound around me many a gold-wrought ring—
Ah, would to God that it had stung me dead!

For now I live in an enchanted world;
I do not see as other people see.
Around my inmost heart the snake is curled,
And other loves are bitterness to me.

A HILL TOP

HIGH on the wind-swept place
My thoughts blow wild and free;
Cast loose from time and space
They revel in elfish glee.

Aloof from the world of woe,
Unscathed by carping care,
They circle to and fro
Like birds in the evening air.

Below on the spreading plain
The city stretches wide:
A hive of toil and pain,
Of squalor and of pride.

There filth and vice are hurled
Abroad for the eye to scan:
But there is the hope of the world—
There beats the heart of man.

And my thoughts when they see the plain
  And the city stretching there,
When they hear life's fierce refrain—
  They tire of the mountain air.

Eager to join the strife
  Begun when the world began,
They would fathom the depths of life
  And the vibrant heart of man.

AT A RECITATION

HER parted lips have spoken the first line—
  Each word, each vowelled value fully said.
  The verse is living that but now was dead,
Stirred with a breath of sympathy divine.

Now more and more the rapture gains on her,
  She fills each verse with passionate fierce power ;
  Our hearts are hers and hers the waiting hour :
We sit as sits a reverent worshipper.

Borne by appealing accents in her voice
  Our souls soar upward to a broader sky
  Where men love nobly, nobly live and die—
And in their moods we grieve or we rejoice.

But chiefly grieve ; I know not by what force,
  Whether she tell of love, or flash of spears,
  Her accents loose the fountains of our tears,
Sharpen the sudden impulse of remorse.

I know not through what tone, deep, tremulous,
What faintest hint of hidden tragedy,
She seems to live this life more passionately
Than that which other hours reveal to us.

But this I know; when by her genius warmed,
And giving life to words of joy or pain,
Some breath akin to God's she seems to gain,
And all who listen are by her transformed.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

FORBIDDEN fruit—ah, who can say
What hidden charm still lingers there . . .
The clustering fruit which hides away
In wealth of waving hair.

Forbidden fruit—ah, who can know
How soon you bring us to despair?
But still, 'twere folly to forego
The bliss which lingers there.

For life is made of joy and pain;
The first is ours to leave or take;
Against the second prayers are vain,
All vain the vows we make.

And pain requires no aid of ours,
He waits not for our yea or nay.
But we have power to pluck us flowers
To glorify our way.

Forbidden sin—ah, who can tell
What hidden charm still lingers there . . .
The clustering fruit which casts a spell
Through wealth of waving hair.

QUATRAINS

ONE day when wandering in a jostling crowd
My dream and faith slipt from me like a shroud;
The world upon my naked body beat,
And to my naked ears it cried aloud:—

There is one God, wherever He may be;
Perchance He is the earth, the sky, the sea,
The all in all. Thou hast to do with man,
So what are God and God-head unto thee?

This wondrous earth of ours, so wide, so fair,
So tranquil through the travail she must bear,
Is not the inert mass men often think,
But laughs, enduring her unceasing care.

She has her soul; a mighty Spirit broods
Within her heart. His potent breath intrudes
His leaven in our few efficient deeds;—
He shapes the universal mother's moods.

Naked, He sits perpetually alert
And watches each one's weal and each one's hurt.
He knows why every single sparrow dies,
But bird and man to Him alike are dirt.

Alike are dirt; for with His brooding eyes
(One glimpse of which to us were Paradise)
He sees in all our lives from chain to chain,—
Sees from the dust the Conqueror arise.

A worm, perhaps, some useful work began,
Preparing fruitful soil, as vermin can;
Ambition seized it to behold the sun,
It saw, then perished 'neath the foot of man.

A man has raised him to the upper air
Of life, for all things come to them that dare;
A breath of tempest smites him unaware,
And down he goes to give the worm a share.

And whether man or worm the nobler be
The Spirit knows; His eyes each effort see;
But if we leave our pile of leaves ungnawed,
The vermin will seem worthier than we.

And if we have achieved the allotted toil,
If we have ploughed and sown our bit of soil,
Shall we devour the sweetness harvested?
He knows who dwells within life's inmost coil.

If, buried, thou couldst come to earth again,
Say, wouldst thou take the pleasure with the pain?
'Twere better if thou couldst for ever sleep;
But thou must wake, so mind the endless chain.

Turn to the earth;—thou takest strength from her,
What strength thou hast; and when thou canst not
stir,
Goest to earth; so thinking upon thee,
Think that by birth thou 'rt brother to the cur.

Why dost thou think thou only hast a soul?
Art thou more mighty than the seas that roll?
Thy death could add but little to the earth,
Thy life cheat Death of but a trivial toll.

What right hast thou to say which act is sin?
Once thou shalt pass the Golden Gates within
Then thou wilt see, perchance with streaming eyes,
What diverse spirits call each other kin.

Go, then, and work; toil hard for those who love
And those who hate thee; so to rise above
The soft immaculates who kneel and dream
About the whiteness of a painted dove.

So thou shalt care not what may come to pass
When thy wine runneth from th' inverted glass.
Toil thou like any earth-consuming worm
If thou wouldst wander on celestial grass.

It may be we shall never quiet rest:
Our souls may never find their chosen nest;
But happy he who through his changing lives
Can truly say: 'Lo, I have done my best!'

He cannot want, though he may starve indeed,
Who bringeth goodly corn from any seed.
Dying he dieth ; living, liveth he :
Of no terrestrial guerdon hath he need.

What we have grown amidst our hopes and fears,
That fruit, though seeming lost to future years,
Is needful unto life as is the sun :
Let that console us when the mocker sneers.

TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

HALF tideless, marvellously coloured sea,
What heart can dream upon you and not beat
The faster for your curious witchery?
The very names of countries which complete
Your perfect beauty, in themselves are sounds
To thrill the soul to its remotest bounds,
And bring us happy slaves before your feet.

Gibraltar, Tunis, Carthage strange and grim,—
The wondrous vision of the mystic Nile,—
Old lands with names harmonious and dim;
Bare Palestine which felt our Saviour smile;
Phœnicia, and the Epic Realm of Troy;
Athens, fair queen of light and mother of joy,
And wide Byzantium fashioned to beguile;

Cypress and Crete, and little isles that are
Many as birds among the clouds astray;
Palermo, the bewitched Trinacrian star;
Sheer mountains where Liparian furies play;
Sorrento, Capri, Baiae sunken deep,
And Naples, like a laughing fawn, asleep,
Curled on the edge of her celestial bay;—

If I could write the love wherewith my heart
  Trembles at dreaming merely on your name,
Borne by your beauty and the might of art,
  Even I could reach the inmost courts of Fame!
Alas! no words are warm enough for you;
No brush can catch that strange, elusive blue
  Which smiles in spite of war and death and shame.

All memories which haunt the heart of man
  Cluster on you like bees about a rose;
Upon your shores our history began,—
  Perchance your smile will hover o'er its close.
Spouse of the sun, belovèd of the dawn,
Sole monument of ages past and gone,
  You yet may lie 'neath mantling Arctic snows.

And many a time my soul has shrunk aghast
  (On mornings clouded in September's mist)
To dream upon your immemorial past;
  For you alone of earthly things resist
Th' insidious offices of dusty Time.
To-day you are enthralling and sublime
  As when upon your shore the Immortals kissed.

Yet yours is not an all untroubled smile;
  We worship, but you mourn the days of old.
You knew our fathers innocent of guile,
  You saw the freedom of the age of gold.
We cannot bring to you that gracious life,
That wondrous art, or that heroic strife,
  Yet give we all the love our hearts can hold.

And love is something ; even love like ours ;
Late, wistful love which glistens in our eyes.
We moderns, dreaming of eternal bowers,
Find you the fairest thing beneath the skies.
And though your laughter mingled be with tears,
Your beauty, shining through the troubled years,
Seems to us our imagined Paradise.

Therefore be merciful, O slumbrous tides ;
And brief, fierce tempests, fitful as of yore,
Wherein the great world-spirit still abides.
Grant us from out your sempiternal store
A tranquil acquiescence, so that we,
Wrapt in your loveliness, enchanted sea,
May dwell in beauty now and evermore.

THE TRIUMPH OF BACCHUS

In those days through all regions of the earth
The great God Bacchus journeyed far and near
Bringing the gifts of peace to savage men.

His face was beautiful as faces seen
In dreams which make us long again to sleep
And dream again the self-same dream. His form,
Perfect in every earthly loveliness,
Immortal with the beauty of the Gods,
Resplendent shone with majesty. His eyes,
Lustrous and deep as lakes at eventide,
Were filled with pity for the woes of men
Which they themselves had wrought to harm themselves.

And round His chariot a motley throng
Of youths and maidens danced a rapturous dance
Which wearied not however far they fared,
Joyous for ever with divine desire.
And some drew forth the silvery laugh of flutes,
While others made the brazen cymbals clang
Accompanying a marvellous melody,
Which rose and fell and rose and fell again,
In rhythms lawless in their very law.

No one can say how long He journeyed; who
Has power to count the moments of the Gods?
The very men that yielded to His sway
And knew the joy which only He could give
Of feeling that they were a needful part
Of one great universe—that their hearts beat
Responsive to the mighty throbbing heart
Of Earth, at once our mother and our nurse—
The dancers in that wonderful strange dance,
Who sang the strains of that immortal hymn,
Knew not how long their rapture had endured,
For moments, hours, or years, or centuries.
But when the God had passed, and they emerged
From out the spell of their mysterious dream,
They still retained a clouded memory
Of all the intense emotion they had known
During the passion of their ecstasy.

In those days, of all countries on the earth
None was more savage than was Kondameer,
A favoured land, hard by the Midland Sea.
There men knew scarce a joy except to slay,
And scarce a crime except to fail to slay
Him they had doomed. They did not pause to spare
The old old woman who had lived a life
Of pain and strenuous toil to bear and rear
Ungrateful sons; nor did they pause to spare
The wondering child who scarce had entered in
The House of Life, and knew not from which one
Of all the doors whereat 'twas his to knock

Would start the symbol of his joy or pain.
Wasting the fertile land from sea to hill
They smirched it to a smoking wilderness,
Wherein they dwelt, if they found means to live,
Like beasts which burrow in earth's kindly clay.
Having no thought to pity him that died,
No time to cherish friend or wife or child,
What they desired they took, or tried and failed;
And passed from bitter life through bitter death,
Unconscious of the glory of the world.

One Autumn morning when they crept betimes
From out their sordid hovels, still befogged
With swinish slumber born of coarse excess,
And gazed athwart the desolated land,
A thrill of distant music reached their ears.
They knew not what it was; they ne'er had known
The mastery of verse or spell of song,
But still they felt the tigerish fierceness fail
Within them, and their eyes suffuse with tears.
Nearer and ever nearer came the sound,
Till they could almost hear the chanted words
But could not see the singers, since their path
Led through a shallow valley girt by hills
Blackened in recent forays. But the men,
The savage ruffians of Kondameer,
Who could not catch the words the singer sang,
Thrilled at their subtile influence, and seemed
Like men just startled from a troubled sleep.

Vague longing for some other life they felt;
Vague aspirations toward some distant goal
They dimly saw and could not understand,
Wakened a new perception in their breasts,
And they beheld with frightened, wondering eyes
How all the aspect of their world had changed.

Nearer and nearer came the wondrous song,
Till they could feel the meaning of the words
Which shamed the squalor of their lives and filled
Their marvelling hearts with infinite desire.

Then they beheld the coming of a car
Drawn by two mighty leopards, proud to bear
The burden of the silver yoke. The car,
With golden emblems wrought, and richly wreathed
With long festoons of purple-fruited vines,
Bore One whose eyes, though dim with tenderness,
Shone brightly with glad love; His radiant lips
Were parted in a smile so sweet and sad,
That those who saw knew well that He had known
All mortal sorrow and all mortal love—
The hate which slays, the love which serves and heals.
Around the car a singing, rapturous throng
Danced madly; and wherever He had passed,
Thro' barren heath, or blackened, wasted field,
Sprang fragrant flowers and golden glowing grain,
And orchards rich with many coloured fruit;
And, best of all, a purple-berried vine
Like that which hung festooned about His car,
Shedding its perfume on the vagrant breeze.

The song, scarce heard, sufficed to charm the ears
Of the fierce ruffians of Kondameer;
The magic words had touched their savage hearts,
Awakening thoughts they had not known before;
But when they saw the chariot they divined
That they were in the presence of a God
Mighty and loving, and they threw them down
And worshipped truly, yet with tardy lips
Of hardened men who are not used to pray.

When the dear God descended from the car
And came among them, straight they caught the name
Whereof the utterance made the singers glad,
And called on *Bacchus* with exuberant prayer
To help them in their need. In broken words
And voices tremulous with eagerness
They told Him of their lives, and the remorse
Wherewith they gazed, now that their eyes could see,
On all the misery their hands had wrought.
'If thou shouldst fail us,' piteously they cried,
'What can we do but perish of despair?'

The God no answer made, but with the smile
Which tamed the fiercest of the ravening tribe
And made the leopards glad to draw His car,
Wandered among them; laid His hand on one,
Brushing another's garment as He passed,
And merely by His presence gave to all
The consolation which they craved.

And they,
Soothed in their fears and raised above themselves,
Grew more and more enwrapt in ecstasy.
Soon they had caught the fervour of the throng
Which danced and sang about the car. They too,
Smitten with inspiration sharp and sweet,
Joined in the harmony of that strange song,
And trod the maze of the symbolic dance
Whose magic rhythm kept the dancers young.
And as the words fell deeper in their hearts,
And as the dancing fired their blood the more,
Little by little each man seemed to lose
His consciousness of self; forgot that he—
The petty mortal dwarfed by selfishness—
Had seemed the centre of the universe,
To whom all universal things should yield
Obedience. Now each felt bound to each
In bonds of holy brotherhood; and this
Fraternity of loving, faithful hearts
Little by little grew to merge itself
Into a larger something, dimly grasped,
Which they by sudden subtile seeing knew
Embraced within its wide and living bonds
All beings from the mightiest of the Gods,
Descending through the glorifying sun,
Through men and beasts and birds and humble plants,
Even unto the seeming-senseless rocks.

They felt and lived the quivering of the trees;
They knew and shared the passion of the sea
And the enduring slumber of the hills.

Unconscious of all bounds of time and space,
With their celestial sovereign they roved
Throughout the earth; past frowning promontories
Where waving forests shuddered at the sea;
Through cities stately with tall pinnacles
And towering palaces; through fertile fields
Aglow with all the gladness of rich life,
And deserts tainted with the fear of death.

And wheresoe'er they came they found a throng
To welcome them and swell the mighty hymn
Which told the glory of their kindly God.

At length they deemed their rapture lent them wings
Wherewith to fly the limits of this world
And pass within the vast abyss of sky
Into a region vague and undefined
Where men were Gods and all the Gods were one,
And He and they and all things, quick or dead,
A shifting unit of some greater whole,
Which stretched for ever on and on and on
Into a nebulous infinity.

But here their rapture failed them, and their eyes,
Beholding things too great for human sight,
Grew dim. (And all the things they seemed to see,
The emotions which had seemed to touch their hearts,
They saw and felt as faintly as a man
Beholds a figure shrouded in white mist
Beneath the rays of an autumnal moon.)

Then suddenly they found the God had passed
From out their land, and far beyond their ken :
Gone were the mighty leopards, gone the car,
And gone, alas ! their rapturous fond dreams.

They were alone, bereaved in Kondameer.

And strange as they had thought His coming there,
Drawn by His leopards, glad with dance and song,
Bringing them wondrous gifts of peace and love,
They deemed it stranger that He should have gone,
Since they had thought Him theirs for evermore.

The fury of their rapturous joy was spent,
And with the slow procession of the years
The memory of the visions they had lived
Grew ever fainter. In their ears the sound
Of the great song was like the murmuring hum
Born in the hollow of a spiral shell
To mock the mighty roaring of the sea.

But though the God had passed from out their land,
And in their hearts His memory grew dim,
They never quite forgot Him ; and they had
To mind them of Him, if they should forget,
The glowing cornfields and the fragrant flowers,
The orchards hung with many coloured fruits,
And all the mystic glory of the vine,
His emblem and his choicest gift.

The hymn
They once had known and sung with rapturous glee
Had almost passed from their awakened ears;
But striving to recall it, still they worked
From every circumstance of daily life
Some song to ease the sting of bitterness
Or render mirth more joyous. And although
The God, departing, bore away with Him
Their intuition of infinity
And their desire to love and serve and heal,
Forgetting self and selfishness, they still
Gazed upon life with tenderer, softer eyes,
Dealt toward each other in a kindlier way,
Unconsciously.

And as folk lived and died,
And younger generations filled the land,
Men, cherishing the service of the God,
Still marvelling at the joy in Kondameer,
Forgot that Bacchus once had journeyed there
And taught them, speaking to them face to face,
A God to men. It seemed a wondrous tale,
A legend of old wives and vine-crowned priests.
But though they might distort or quite forget
The story of His travails among men,
They still possessed the gifts which He had brought,
The grain and fruit and flowers and rural peace.
And though they deemed His journeying but a tale,
And though they spoke of Him with slighting word,
They still preserved their worship of the grape,
At once His emblem and His crowning gift.

LONELINESS

A GHOST is in the room to-night,
  He came from yonder curtained door;
  I feel him creep across the floor
In search of fellowship and light.

He comes to me—I know not why.
  What can I give that he can take?
  I can but greet him for the sake
Of gayer hours in days gone by.

A gentle ghost he needs must be,
  He is so quiet and so staid:
  And therefore I am not afraid
However close he comes to me.

I cannot give him ease or mirth
  (Poor ghost, alone for evermore!),
  But he is welcome to my door
And to my solitary hearth.

A ghost is in the room to-night,
  I feel him creep across the floor.
  Would I could give him greater store
Of love and fellowship and light!

THE TAVERN

Ah, Soul, 'tis pleasant in this tavern room,
  Cooled by the breeze that whispers through the vine;
  And it is sweet to sip the fragrant wine
Which mellowed slowly in the cellars' gloom.

And sweet it was to breathe the faint perfume
  Of honeysuckle and of eglantine;
  To watch their fragile tendrils intertwine
And bower the freshness of their summer bloom.

But, Soul, we left the pleasant country road,
  And left the stream where we were fain to rest,
And now must leave this quiet cool abode.

For it were shame that any one could say:
  'See, they who started boldly for the crest
Have tarried at a tavern in midway.'

FROM 'THE QUEST OF HERACLES'

FROM 'THE QUEST OF HERACLES'

ANTINOÜS

A CLOUDLESS sky above a treeless plain
Of sand and sandhills, where one longs in vain
For shade, which neither cloud nor tree affords
Though hosts may die,—where thirst and death are lords
Of all the long, lone land and breathless air
Which stifles every breeze with its despair.
A traveller entering hardly may return
From out this land, where thirst and famine burn
Death's incense; whereon gazing, he must feel
A doubt through all his veins and sinews steal
That Gods are good, since they have made this land
Hate-worthy, with its death-ensnaring sand
For ever seeking for some further prey.

And so Antinoüs, all the livelong day,
Thrice seven days that seemed like seven years,
With night and day contending, sharp as spears,
'Gainst bitter grief, he lay and gazed athwart
The desert, feeling hatred in his heart
Toward all the Gods. The terrace where he lay
Was faint with heat and garish with the day.

He knew it not, but buried his head deep
Within the cushions that would have him sleep
For joy to hold him, and moaned 'Hadrian!'
And all the long courts murmured 'Hadrian!'

For Hadrian, the lord, was sick to death;
The days dragged on, and men could scarce see
breath
Upon the mirror held above his mouth.
His pulse scarce stirred; the languor of the
south
Enwrapped his limbs; and messengers had sped
To Beza, to the God, where truth was wed
To prophecy most surely, there to learn
If he must die, or if he might return
To life through any leechcraft known to men.
'Twas time the seekers should return again
With answer, so men waited. Now of all
His followers of war, or chase, or hall,
The great lord loved Antinoüs the most.
There was no warrior chief in all his host,
No maid of all the fragrant singing bands
That tended him, the choice of many lands,
He loved so much. Antinoüs returned
His love so greatly that he scarcely yearned
For love of women. So he sadly lay
Upon the terrace, gazing on the way
Whereby the messengers should come. And now
He saw a speck upon the desert's brow,
A tiny speck against the setting sun
In silhouette. And shortly, one by one,

A train of camels, carrying each a man,
Grew from the cloud, and ere the night began
Drew near unto the palace. Each man knew
The answer, seeing them. Antinoüs, too,
Saw by their looks that he to whom he gave
His love might live. And to the foremost slave
That entered, he gave thanks for the good cheer
So brought. The weary messenger drew near
In solemn-wise, and said with tearful voice:
"'Tis well for us, Antinoüs, to rejoice—
The emperor may live: and yet I fear
He'll grieve therefor, since thus-wise in mine ear
The great God spoke, "The emperor may live
In health and peace, if only he will give
The life of whom he loveth most: if not,
His bones must lie within the hopeless spot
Where now he lieth. 'Tis the only way
His eyes may rest upon each new-born day
With gladness in the joy thereof."' And then
The slave traversed the courtyards thronged with men,
Unto his resting-place. Antinoüs, left
Alone, gave thanks like one not all bereft
Of gladness, yet not happy quite. He knew
The import of the oracle; him too
The God had mentioned, in his guarded-wise
Unnaming, since of all beneath the skies
The emperor held him dearest. And for this
He had been born on earth; had known the bliss
Of love surpassing woman's love; had known
The joy of straining arms about him thrown,

The free companionship of Hadrian,—
That he might give his life for Hadrian.
He wrestled fiercely in his anguished heart
Against his love; he wept, that he must part
From life and all its joy, to wander where
He never more could breathe Bithynian air,
Nor see Hyrcanian lions battle fierce
'Gainst Dacian slaves; no more see spear-heads pierce
Broad breasts of men; nor watch the choking fight,
The wounds, and blood, and death, and sickening fright,
He loathed and fiercely loved. He fought in vain;
His love grew greater, showed his way more plain,
Burned stronger from the conflict; and again
He hid his head and murmured 'Hadrian!'
And all the long courts echoed 'Hadrian!'

Then summoned he a slave, and bade him bring
His stylus and his tablets—everything
For writing; and like one enwrapt in spell,
He wrote: 'O Hadrian, my friend, farewell!
A life, love-worthy unto thee alone,
I offer up that thou mayst keep thine own,
Of all men needed. Pray thee, think of me
When I am gone beyond the bitter sea
Men mention with hushed breath. Again, farewell!'
His heart leapt up, although it heard its knell
Pealed softly forth. He faltered not, but gave
The letter to the still-attending slave,

Bidding him lay it by the emperor's bed
Against his waking. Then he softly sped
Toward the stables, bade bring out a horse,
Then mounted, and in swift unthinking course
Rode far athwart the still, the moonlit night.

The desert reached the palace on the right.
Upon the left, a strip of fertile ground
Stretched sheer unto the river bank, to bound
The waste of water and the waste of sand.
Between two deserts lay this garden land.
Through this Antinoüs galloped, till he came
Unto the Nile, that gleamed like palest flame,
So pallid, underneath the long moonlight—
A molten silver stream athwart the night:
So broad, that all the further bank was lost
In mystery, save where a temple tossed
The broken moonbeams from its polished walls.
And all was still as Death's enmuffled halls
Skull-mounted. Here and there stars made a glade
Within the Nile. Some time Antinoüs stayed
In musing lost and thought. His charger neighed
For fear; Antinoüs loosed him, and he sped
Back homeward. There, as lonely as the dead,
Antinoüs stood, the fairest born of men
Beside earth's fairest river. Then again
He murmured slowly, sadly, 'Hadrian!'
And all the world made answer, 'Hadrian!'
For to Antinoüs all the world's hope clung.
Now gently went he, silently, among
The river sedges, till advancing where

The lazy river lapped its boundaries, there
He paused a moment. On he went, the while
The stream grew deeper. Then the mighty Nile,
The great of rivers, rose to welcome him;
The long waves wrapped around each cleaving limb
And drew him onward. Then the Gods were glad,
And all was over.

Only one was sad
In all the world: the emperor. When he read
His friend's farewell, and knew that he was dead,
He longed for death, and lived. But still he made
In every court, in every temple shade,
An image of the fairest born of men.
And it is told that on his deathbed, when
His courtiers asked what man should hold the throne,
He answered nothing, murmuring alone
'Antinoüs.' And surely of the twain
Antinoüs was the happier—his the gain
Of love in death, while unto Hadrian
The death in love.

And in this later earth,
With all its pain and pleasure, grief and mirth,
There scarce is one who hath not in some place
The image of Antinoüs. The fair face
And sweet lips, telling us 'twixt sigh and smile
The memory and mystery of the Nile—
That tells us without need of speech or breath
The joy of life, the wondrous peace of death.

SCENT O' PINES

LOVE, shall I liken thee unto the rose
That is so sweet?
Nay, since for a single day she grows,
Then scattered lies upon the garden-rows
Beneath our feet.

But to the perfume shed when forests nod;
When noonday shines;
That lulls us as we tread the woodland sod,
Eternal as the eternal peace of God—
The scent o' pines.

MOONRISE

WHEN Adam, on his first terrestrial day,
Beheld the dark devouring shades of night
Descend, and hide the garden from his sight,
He prostrate fell, and trembling strove to pray.
He pressed his forehead deep into the clay;
He hearkened to earth's travail with affright;
He strove to still his breathing, lest it might
Enrage the Thing that drove the light away.

But when, as borne upon the night air's breath,
A light shone, and the East therewith was dyed
To silver, Adam rose, and saw the wide
Moon hurrying on as one that hasteneth;
Then was his heart released from fear of death,
And all the waiting world was glorified.

A BALLADE OF RIDING

Ho, for a horse on a summer night!
When the moon is full, and the winds at play
Laugh aloud in their free delight,
And have no will to stop nor stay.
And on rush we, away, away,
Under the forest boughs, so fleet
That we stir the leaves to dance and play,
And the whole world echoes with galloping feet.

Thro' forest glades where the air is bright,
And moonlit branches glisten and sway,
And on thro' the midst of the forest's might,
Where moonlight and shadow join tremulous fray;
Through darker aisles where never a ray
Of moon or star can find retreat;
And the darkness opens to give us way,
And the whole world echoes with galloping feet.

Hurrying on in our headlong flight,
We speed till we come in the night's decay
To the river, whose ripples, left and right,
Murmurous up to the edges stray.

Along the banks our course we lay,
And eastward speed the dawn to greet;
While the moon looks down so sad and grey,
And the whole world echoes with galloping feet.

Friend, is there any joy which may
Compare with this, when the pulses beat,
When life is young, and the heart is gay,
And the whole world echoes with galloping feet?

FIVE SONNETS

I

FIRST seeing thee, in heart a rebel, I
  Half-knew that thou wouldst rule my life for me,
  Yet impotently fought the tyranny
As earth resists the dominating sky.
I did not dare with mine to meet thine eye
  For fear of being utter thrall to thee:
  And half I hated—my hostility
Was but a mask for love, was but a lie.

Ah, fool! I did not know how sweet it is
  To own a master; to give up the fight,
And yield me to the overwhelming bliss
  Of being loved and loving. Now my sight,
By struggle cleared, hath sounded Love's abyss,
  And rapturous I yield me to his might.

II

It came upon me like a flash of sun
A-piercing through the cloudy raiment spread
Beneath the sky: 'Why, this is love!' I said,
'And this is she, the Love-appointed one.'
I know that long before had love begun
To turn my heart to her ere I had read
Its timorous path; and so the sun had sped
Behind the threatening veil the clouds had spun.

Oh, who can tell the rapture of the thought
That some one sitteth, murmuring my name
Even as I murmur hers? So love hath brought
Our souls into the compass of one frame;
We are twin spirits in one body caught,
Two sister sparks of God's eternal flame.

III

TOGETHER, side by side, we watched the dawn
Creep slowly from the shrouded lap of night.
The westering moon was shorn of half its light
By day's advance, and all the stars grew wan.
Within, the revelling dancers had not gone;
We heard their far-off laughter of delight;
The music came with faint, pulsating might,
And fell with dying cadence on the lawn.

Beloved, I felt our twin-born spirits soar
Beyond the barriers of this earthly frame,
And, mingling each with each, pass through the door
Archangels guard, their swords alive with flame,
Unto our Lady's feet; and evermore
I love the Virgin, since she bears thy name.

IV

HER name makes glad my lips when I awake
And laugh a welcome to the jocund day,
The while, about me, memories of her play—
Of things she did once, or of words she spake.
And if inevitable care o'ertake
My path—what life eternally is gay?—
I think of her, and hasten care away,
And life is full of flowers for her sweet sake.

And when at night I turn me to my rest,
I think upon her love, and smile at fate.
I marvel my affection should be blest
With such a vast return; thus, soon or late,
Whether my fortunes be at worst or best,
My livelong day to her is consecrate.

V

Now she whom I swore true eternally
Has failed in loving, and I know not why.
I shall not ask the reason—she and I
Have been too near for questioning from me.
I 'll not reproach her ; her love should be free
However mine be bound ; nor shall I cry
Because she loveth me no more, nor try
To hide from her my utter misery.

Suffice it she hath loved, and I love still—
More rapture than my merit had deserved ;
No gift had I to please her, but the will.
I did but duty had I never swerved
From striving her sweet wishes to fulfil ;
I am rewarded in that I have served.

RETIREMENT

In dusky Nubia Rameses the Great
Once hewed a temple from the living stone;
He wrought it for the joys of Gods alone,
Where they could dwell serene and brood on fate.
Afar from mortal glory, paltry state,
Eternally removed from hymn or moan,
Horemku, Amen, Ptah, with crown and throne,
The end of all things tranquilly await.

I too would carve, with what I have of art,
Inviolable, a sacred citadel
Within the utmost province of my heart;
Where, safe as spouse of God in convent cell,
My buried love, for evermore apart,
Serene unto eternity may dwell.

SONG

WHERE met we last? What recollections rise
Within our hearts from out a shameful past;
My soul springs up as many tongues, and cries:
'Where met we last?'

The self-same sun is hurrying westward fast;
The same old landscape round about us lies;
The self-same trees are bending in the blast;

But we who once gazed in each other's eyes
Unceasing, pass on now with eyes downcast.
We shudder as at faintly heard replies:
Where met we last?

HER PICTURE

WHAT of her picture? Nay it is not she,
Tho' all that lieth in it is so fair:
The silken eyelid and the heapy hair,
The haunting profile with its mystery;
The woman's heart for honest eyes to see,
The smile that drives a lover to despair,—
Tho' these which seem her very self are there,
That self from such imprisonment is free.

And yet I love her picture, lacking her,
And having her I still should cherish it.
I love each feature, though it doth not stir;—
I love the smiles that o'er her features flit.
Seeing her portrait, I 'm her worshipper,
And seeing her I love her counterfeit.

REFUGE

FAIN would I journey from these barren lands
Where I was born, unto the magic isles
Of tropic seas, where Winter kindlier smiles
Than doth the Summer of our northern strands.
And I would wander on the golden sands
Of tropic rivers reaching miles and miles
Thro' orchid-bowers where the sun beguiles
Our hearts with scattered gifts from lavish hands.

Then Homer to the Old World carries me
In hollow ships across the crested main;
And Chaucer shows each April-haunted lane
Of England. Spenser gives enchanted sea,
His summer woods, and purple pageantry;
While Dante guides me through the world of pain.

SHADOW'S HOUSE

It is a castle builded as of old
Men built, with triple rampart girded round
And stored with vaults that reaching underground
Keep what the Past hath left of sinful gold.
Armed sentries guard the entrance to the hold,
To bar men out; and till a man hath found
The countersign, and murmured o'er the sound,
He may not see the iron doors unfold.

Yet one way is there to defy the bar; . . .
For oft a sleeping soul is borne therein,
And sees and mourns the shadow of her sin,
And mourns the shadowy pleasure, flown afar.
Returning then, while fear and darkness are,
She shuddereth, knowing scarce where she hath been.

STRIFE

A MAN may gather wisdom, growing old,
And pleasure, as he sees each well-wrought task
Approach completion; yet his heart may ask
Were youth not cheaply bought with learning's gold?

And thou, O world, mayst weep that having sold
Thy birthright thou didst leave the peaceful fields
Of youth to struggle through the path that yields
A finite joy with labour manifold.

But we, the children of these later years,
The years whose very faith is doubt-embued,
Rejoice that, plunging in the path of spears,
Thou didst avoid the land where peace doth brood.
Our hearts, inured to wringing hopes from fears,
Had sickened in that endless quietude.

SPRING-SONG

SWEET, since the Spring hath come with lengthening
days,
And all the world
Is bright with many-flowered perfumed ways,
And every bird is offering Love his praise
With wing unfurled—
Shall we keep silence in the golden hours?
Shall we not bend us to Love's sovereign powers?
Shall we not love while all the young-eyed flowers
With dew are pearled?

And, Sweet, since May's round moon is full and bright
As when, in Thrace,
The virgins met in each month's midmost night,
And prayed with mystic charms of occult might
For Dian's grace—
Shall we, when all the night with love is ringing,
When all the woods are sweet with dewdrops clinging,
Shall we, with all the great world's heart a-singing,
Not seek Love's face?

A BALLADE OF DAWN

'Placida notte e verecondo raggio
Della cadente luna.'

THE wan east quivers, and a chilling breeze
Comes trembling o'er the earth; the silence lies
Oppressively on all things, and the trees
Don ever-changing shapes while night-time dies;
From off the river feathery mists arise
And clothe the shivering earth with garments rare.
Changed things, that seem like uncouth monsters, glare
Where late the moonlight cast a charmèd glow;
The stars grow faint and fade into the air,
And in the west the weary moon hangs low.

To-night has been a night of nights; great seas
Of tremulous moonlight, pouring from the skies,
Enchanted all the earth, and made surcease
Of restlessness, and stilled each vague surmise;
Its beauty charmed away earth's labouring sighs,
And brought nepenthe for its sharp despair.
Strange shadows hurried o'er the meadows, where
The wavering mist now billows to and fro.
Alas! the night is gone that was so fair,
And in the west the weary moon hangs low.

And with the night hath fled the golden ease
  That filled my heart beneath the myriad eyes
Of midnight. Day is near, and beauty flees
  Beneath her naked squalor. Now the cries
  Of birds are heard, who know that in some wise
Another day must yield the wonted share
Of hard-earned food. And all the beasts prepare
  To fight for niggard gifts their lives bestow.
Day's murmurs stir them in their nightly lair,
  And in the west the weary moon hangs low.

Yet this is but a symbol; everywhere
  Could man find peace if his weak heart would dare
To search; the very dawn is joyful, though
  Its breath seems chilled with day and toil and care,
And in the west the weary moon hangs low.

REQUIEM

Now she is dead,
What shall be said of her
By any man whose hand hath stroked her head,
Who was her worshipper?
Her tale is said;
The glory of her palpitant life hath sped.
Come, lay her in the tomb,
Where naught shall stir
Within the mantling of the reverent gloom.

She had no soul—
Nay, you that knew her well,
That made her timorous heart your utmost goal,
Yea, even you must tell
How the bells' toll
Hath signified the closing of the scroll
Whose rubric was her face.
The funeral knell
Hath rung the curtain on her radiant grace.

But where she lies
Plant every flower that grows.
Let violets set us dreaming of her eyes;
And for her heart a rose,

With crimson dyes,
Shall paint for us a murmurous paradise.
Let lilies flaunt and float
Within the close,
In memory of the marvel of her throat.

And, for her hair,
Let tender fronds of fern
Grow tremulous in the enamoured air,
Around her cavern urn.
She was so fair,
We must not think what now is lying there
Beneath the sod,
Lest we should spurn
What once we worshipped as the proof of God.

LAST VERSES

WASUKI

I

BEFORE a populous city's gate
Once towered an old, old banian tree;
And the ages passed and it still waxed great.

And there, in a hollow you scarce could see,
So many the branches, so thick the shade,
Where the air was as still as a summer sea,

A great black cobra his home had made.
Thence every day when the sun was high
He crawled, and his coils in the sun he laid.

Uncoiling and coiling he used to lie;
And those who came from the ancient town,
And all who passed the cobra by,

Lured by his age, and his strange renown,
Brought milk and honey and spice and wine
For love of him and his jewelled crown.

For his hood, they thought, hid a gem divine,
A stone of infinite, mystical power
For works of evil or works benign.

And for ages he haunted his sacred bower,
And generations of men came there
To bring him gifts at the noontide hour.

II

Within the town, in a garden fair,
A wide-renownèd merchant dwelt.
(In gold and jewels and trinkets rare,

And curious skins and stuffs he dealt,
In wine which biddeth our hearts be glad,
And spices to burn when the faithful knelt.)

A daughter, an only child, he had;
Idol and child at once was she,
Yet midst her splendour her heart was sad.

She had jewels from river and mine and sea,
For them she cared, and for naught beside;—
But she dreamed of the snake by the banian tree

And the stone which his hood was said to hide.—
No joy in living she found by day;
And at night, with her dark eyes open wide,

Yearning to hold the gem she lay;
Till at length, when her heart was nigh to break
With longing, she bade a bondsman slay

The magic serpent for whose strange sake
Her life was poisoned with grief and woe.
And the slave by treachery slew the snake,

Then sought for the gem in his hood ; and lo !
No stone was there or aught else of gain.
So back to the maiden he needs must go

With his tale of the serpent foully slain ;
And still she pined for the unfound stone,
With never a thought for the cobra's pain.

III

Now news of the murder had swiftly flown
To Wasuki, king of the snakes, where he
Coiled in the jungle's heart, alone.

And he thought : ' The blow was a stroke at me ;
My dearest subject will never more
Make glad the folk at the banian tree.

Never again when the sun shines o'er
The fertile fields will he come at noon
For gifts which the faithful people pour.

Never again hear the babies croon
With rapture to see his wise old head
And his glittering coils ; nor hear the tune

The muttering priests so oft have said.'
And he thought : ' This deed is a slight to me,
And I must avenge my subject dead.'

Invoking the Gods of glamourie,
He sloughed the coils of his serpent shape
Wherein his spirit was wont to be.

Then, murmuring softly an ancient charm
Whose words were potent the earth to span,
He sped from the jungle, so soft and warm,

And came in the guise of a strong young man
To the town where his subject was basely slain,
To the boundless grief of the serpent clan.

And with him he brought a sumptuous train
Of camels with meekly protesting eyes,
All laden with woods of precious grain,

With silken carpets and marvellous dyes,
With amber and ivory cunningly wrought,
And gems like the jewels of Paradise.

A stately palace he straightway bought,
And, like a merchant, his wares displayed,
As if on gain he had fixed his thought.

But he found the garden where lived the maid,
And he bought and sold with her father there,
And little by little his plans he laid.

It chanced that the maiden, to soothe her care,
Wandered one day from her private place
To the spot where he sat with his gorgeous ware.

At his store of riches she fain would gaze,
At the gold and jewels which glowed and gleamed,
But was almost blinded to see his face,

From which a wonderful glory beamed
Of youth and manhood mingled, yet more
Than in one of earthly folk, she deemed.

So she turned from the beauty outspread before;
To her inmost chamber she swiftly sped,
And crouched with her face on the marble floor.

Was he one of the Gods of whom she had read,
She wondered, or mortal of mortals born,
To love a maiden, to woo, and wed?

Would she win his love, or only his scorn?
And alas! perhaps he had not seen!—
Despairing of love, she lay forlorn,

And writhed in her anguish; yet, between
The moments of grieving, her face would flush
And her full lips part in a smile serene,

When hope, like a torrent's impetuous rush,
Thrilled through her veins, and with hot tears
Of gladness her tremulous eyes would gush.

Long hours she lay 'twixt her hopes and fears,
Till there came at noon a faithful slave
With tidings of joy for his lady's ears;

That the youthful stranger, so fair, so brave,
Had asked permission her love to seek,
Which the gold-loving merchant gladly gave.

When her father came she could scarcely speak,
So great was her joy, but she murmured 'Yes,'
And blushed like a maiden mild and meek.

But her heart leapt up from its dim distress,
Rejoicing to feel 'twas no more alone,
But had found a stronger to rule and bless.

She thought that love could for all atone;
All dreams of the cobra she put away,
Nor thought of her lust for the mystic stone.

IV

Then her suitor came to her day by day
With precious gifts of her heart's desire
And kisses as sweet as the breath of May.

She deemed that his lips would never tire;
And she dreamed of and treasured such gifts as these
Till her blood seemed turned to a liquid fire.

At length, 'neath propitious auspices,
On a fortunate day, the doctors said,
With the prayers which the marriage-rite decrees,

And the blessing of priests, the two were wed;
And when the nuptial feast was done
Were carried with songs to their marriage-bed.

And now that the prize of her life was won
She felt no shrinking nor maiden fear.
At last they were married, were one, were one!

Their love was awake and their skies were clear.
The lips which she deemed would never tire
Drew nearer hers, and yet more near,

With a smile of an infinite desire,
And the parted lips and sensuous smile
Showed a pointed tongue, like a lambent fire ;

Which darted hither and thither, the while
There gleamed the light in his smouldering eyes
Which the ravening serpent shows to beguile

The trembling prey till it falls and dies. . . .
The bridal guests had lingered long ;
Had laughed at the jester's strident cries,

Had gloated on many a dance and song,
Had eaten and drunken, layman and priest,
And homeward had gone in a joyous throng.

By this the sun had looked over the East,
The world was awake, and revel kept,
Since the baleful reign of the night had ceased.

The merchant dozed, and soon he slept ;
The time flew by till he started up,
And, seeing the hour, he softly stepped

To the nuptial door with the soothing cup
The two should drink ere they left the room ;
From the self-same vessel their lips should sup

The self-same life, and the self-same doom.
He hearkened to hear if anything stirred,
But all was as still as a buried tomb.

Away he crept with never a word,
But filled with mirth that they slept so late
And slept so soundly they had not heard

The guests departing with shambling gait
And noisy song; nor heard when he came
To the room where they lay in wedded state.

V

As the day waxed old, and the sun's hot flame
Less hotly shone, the merchant's mind
Grew anxious with terror which had no name.

He could not think that the two were blind
To the passing day and the coming night.
If he forced the door would his eyes not find

Some shameful deed or some fearful sight?
They would not have tarried the livelong day
With never a sound, if all were right!

Trembling with fear, and weak, and grey,
He summoned his bondsmen, and bade them hew
The ponderous bolts of the door away.

Hither and thither the fragments flew;
Swifter and swifter the blows were sped,
And ever his nameless terror grew.

The door swung open. Upon the bed
He saw his daughter naked lie,
And he saw that his only child was dead.

Alone 'neath the silken canopy
Stark she lay, and on either breast
A tiny spot of a blood-red dye ;

As if a serpent had made its nest,
Deeming its roving days were o'er,
Within the folds of her silken vest,

And stung when the garment fell to the floor.
Of the last night's bridegroom they saw no trace—
But a cobra writhed through the shattered door.

THE DEATH OF PAN

DAPHNIS and Chloe on a summer day,—
Seeing their flocks were far too tired to stray,
But rested in the noon-tide's blazing heat
Huddled together, nose and flank and feet,—
Sat side by side beneath the canopy
Made by the branches of an olive tree.

The lad was restless ; and his gleaming eyes
Now to the earth he turned, now to the skies.
Small beads of sweat stood glistening on his brow ;
It seemed he wished to speak, but knew not how.
The maiden, too, seemed ill at ease to-day,
But still could talk, though she had naught to say.

'How silly sheep are, lying there,' she said,
'Full in the sun, when they could lie instead
Under the spreading shadow of some tree!'
'I don't care what the sheep may do,' said he,
'My heart and mind are full of my own pain.'

Then she: 'O, thrifty shepherd, to disdain
The helpless sheep committed to your care!
I thought you were more faithful. Surely where
Men earn their bread, their duty lies!'

And he:

'I am so sunk in helpless misery
I know not what I say nor what I do.'

Then Chloe, gazing at the peaceful view
Outspread before them: 'See the olive trees
Grey in the sun and rustling in the breeze,
How wonderful and beautiful they are.'
But Daphnis' thoughts were wandering so far
He did not hear—or deigned not to reply.

Chloe glanced quickly at his sullen eye
And, smiling slightly, tried to speak again,
But he broke in. 'Do you not see my pain?
You talk of tender hearts! Why, for long hours
I 've suffered, yet you rave of fields and flowers,
And never ask me why I suffer so.
Why don't you ask?'

Said she: 'Because—I know
But do not mean to tell . . . at least just now.'

Then Daphnis started, and his youthful brow
Grew troubled. 'Why, *I* do not know . . . and you . . .'
He faltered. 'Nay, it surely can't be true!
You did not notice until I complained,
You did not see how all my members pained.
My thoughts were wandering like the silly sheep
Which have no shepherd maiden skilled to keep
Their witless feet from going far astray.

My life was drearier than a dreary day;
My heart was burning now, now chilled with cold:
All this you did not know until I told,
And so you cannot know the cause, I 'm sure.'

Then answered Chloe, more and more demure:
'Yes, but I do.'

'Then tell me all, I pray,'
Pleaded the lad.

'Sometime, but not to-day,'
She answered mockingly, while he grew red
With anger.

'Ah, you do not know,' he said,
'Else you would tell. All women are the same,
No sense of truth, of pity, or of shame!'
(Daphnis had entered then his twentieth year,
Therefore his views on women were severe.)

Chloe grew vexed: 'By all the Gods above,'
She swore, 'I know! and know you are in love;
Your heart is longing for life's greatest bliss.'

'Great Pan,' gasped he, 'how very true that is.
I am in love . . . how wonderful it seems . . .
The blissful feeling of my hopes and dreams
Was mine without my knowing I possessed.
How could *you* know?'

She answered: 'Why, I guessed.'

'And can you guess who caused this love of mine?'

'Women have certain powers to divine
Diseases,' answered she, 'but lack the force
Of mind to trace the causes to their source.
Now that you know Love has you in his thrall
You ought to know what maid occasioned all
Your suffering. But come, confide in me!
My heart is tender;—tell your misery.'

'But can't you guess?' persisted he, now grown
Less sullen, while his eyes with ardour shone.

Chloe seemed somewhat pensive. 'No,' she said,
'I cannot guess what miracle of maid
Has caught your fickle heart to make it hers.
For you are fickle—like the breeze which stirs
The tree top, and then hurries to the sea.
You will not love her long.'

'I swear,' said he,
More eager now, 'to love her all my life!
If she consent, I'd gladly call her wife.
I know she's good and has a tender heart,
Yet, on occasion, she can play a part;
Can fib to help a shepherd in his need,
Yet in herself, is true in word and deed.
I need not say she is fair; all maids are fair
Who feed their flocks beneath this pastoral air.

And she is skilled in meats and herbs and wine,
In everything—in short, she is divine;
And I—am nothing! Nay, what am I? You
Who know so much, oh, teach me how to woo!'

Chloe was deep in thought; between her eyes
Stretched two faint wrinkles, laughable and wise.
To Daphnis she seemed serious; the while
The Gods saw she was trying not to smile.
At length she asked: 'What have you given her
To show you are her faithful worshipper?

'Why,' answered Daphnis, 'till this very hour,
Until you told me I was in Love's power,
I did not know it. How could I bestow
Gifts? Even now I 'm sure I do not know
What things to give.'

'Of course, I cannot guess,'
Said Chloe, 'whom you love; but none the less,
She is a mortal maiden, I suppose,
So give her what the bee gave to the rose.'

'And what was that?' asked he, a shade more pale.

'What! don't you know that dear old shepherd tale?
I'll tell you, then, but you must swear to keep
A steady watch upon the silly sheep.
You must not even look at me, lest they
Should seize the chance to wander far astray.

By all his Gods he swore, but most by Pan,
To do her bidding; and the maid began
To tell her story 'neath the olive tree:—

Early one summer morn (she said), a Bee,
Thirsting for sweetness, came upon a Rose.
He saw the fragrant petals fast enclose
The golden heart, and longed to enter there.
'Ah, open to me, open, oh most fair,'
He sighed, 'or I must die of my desire.'
'Not so,' the Rosebud answered; 'I require
A pledge ere my affection may be sought.
Why should I give my sweetness up for naught?'
Uncertain what to give, he spied a pool
A-shimmer in the shadow, dim and cool.
'Oh tell me, Pool of Wisdom,' straight he cried,
'What must I give to win her for my bride?'
'Water,' the fountain answered murmuringly,
'Of all things is most precious. Come to me,
Take what you will, and fly away again.
I soothe the pains of flowers and beasts and men' . . .
The joyous Bee flew homeward to the Rose.
'I bring you water,' cried he, 'come, unclose
Your golden heart that I may make it mine.'

'Water,' the Rosebud echoed, 'is divine;
Source of my life and its preserver too.
But every night the Goddess of the Dew
Enfolds me in her cloak till break of day.
I do not need this gift.'

'He flew away
Dejected, wondering could the world enclose
Gifts rich enough to please a budding rose.
Hither and thither flying, here and there,
Asking the denizens of earth and air
What he should offer to the Rosebud fair,
He passed long hours. But all his gifts, she said,
Were much too simple; so again he sped
Away to seek for more recondite things.
'She wants,' the Owl said, 'Sleep.' The Lark said 'Wings,'
The Bat said 'Darkness,' and the Eagle 'Light.'
The Lamb thought 'Peace.' The Wolf declared 'A fight.'
The Peacock said, 'Give her a sight of me!'—
The Rose scorned all the offerings of the Bee.
At length, close huddled in the fragrant shade
Of orchard trees he saw a youth and maid,
And asked the youth how one could win such bliss.
The young man answered: 'Have you tried—a kiss.'
'A kiss it must be,' thought the Bee, and flew
Homeward again to try the Rose anew.
This time he did not tell her what he brought,
He did not ask if this were what she sought;
But flying to her with impetuous haste
He wound his downy arms about her waist,
And kissed her with a kiss so soft and warm
The petals opened to reveal the charm
Which only they were given to behold.
And thus the Bee possessed the heart of gold.

Pausing to point the moral, Chloe found
Two sinewy arms tightly about her wound;
Her blood raced tingling to her finger tips,
Her mouth was caught and kissed by burning lips;
Her brain grew dizzy. Though she strove to say
'You monster! Oh, how dare you! Go away!'
Her treacherous lips went wandering amiss,
They could do nothing but return the kiss.
Too weak to strive, she could do naught but lie
Pressed to him close beneath the unblushing sky.

At length he whispered: 'Chloe, dear, you knew
That I could love no shepherdess but you;
How could you be so cruel as to feign
You did not know it? Why increase my pain?'

She answered: 'You, who ought to be above
Pretending, said you did not know that Love
Had caused your woe; but I am sure you knew.'

'You saw,' he said, 'I was in love with you;
Confess!'

'I would not even if 't were true,
And it is *not*,' she said.

They quarrelled then,
And sulked until they turned and kissed again.

But suddenly the closely crowded sheep
Heard a strange step and started from their sleep.

Daphnis and Chloe heard and drew apart;
Each felt the beating of the other's heart.
Looking to see what filled the sheep with fear,
They saw an aged shepherd coming near.
'"Tis old Damoctas; he will wish us well,'
Said Chloe; 'let us hasten down and tell
Him of our love. He is a holy man,
And sure to know what gifts to offer Pan,
In thanks for all our joy.'

But youth and maid
When they approached Damoctas grew afraid:
Anxiety had furrowed all his brow.
Their speech came faltering . . . they knew not how.
Until they asked what gifts to offer Pan
He listened silently, then he began:
'O, wretched children! In a time like this
Can misery be baffled by a kiss?
Would I were lying 'neath the pasture sod!
For Pan, the great God Pan, the well-loved God,
The God of pastures and of flocks and herds,
Of lovelorn shepherds and of singing birds,
Of dewy forests and of upland glens,
Of woodland litters and of pastoral dens,
In heart a God, a goat in hairy thighs,
All-knowing and all-pitying, ears and eyes,
The eldest of the Gods, the bards have said,
Great Pan, the God of all of us, is dead!'

He ceased, and wept. Chloe, her lustrous eyes
Brimming with tears, her utterance choked with sighs,

Whispered to Daphnis : ' Do you think 'tis true?
If Pan be dead, who was it gave me—you ?'

Daphnis looked puzzled ; but he pressed her hand,
And answered : ' Nay, I do not understand.
If Pan were dead, all pleasure should be o'er,
But I am happier than I was before.
I 'll ask Damoctas how he knows ; and he,
Perchance, can solve this baffling mystery.

And old Damoctas mournfully replied :
' Lately some sailors heard a voice which cried
For Thamus, who was pilot on their ships,
My boyhood's friend ; the tale is from his lips.
" When thou," the mystic voice shrilled down the
breeze,
" Hast come unto the Height of Palodes
(The haunt of Nymphs since first the world began),
Announce to all the earth the death of Pan.
For Pan is dead."

' The strange voice seemed to fail.
The idle wind became a rushing gale
Which bore them swiftly to the sacred Height,
Where Thamus, through the darkness of the night,
Proclaimed his tidings. Then the sailors heard
A rustling as if woodland creatures stirred,
A gentle sound of sighs, and moans, and tears.
And next a grievous wailing smote their ears,
More piteous than the grieving of a man,
The lamentations of the Nymphs for Pan !

'Turning their ships, they hastened from the place.
Each shrank from gazing in his fellow's face.
They trimmed their sails, but no one spoke a word.
They dared not even think what they had heard.
Like patient beasts they bore their load of dread,
Where could they turn for aid, since Pan was dead?'

The three were silent when the tale was done.
Gone seemed the glory of the earth and sun.
Damoctas, bowed with grief, wept silently.
Daphnis and Chloe, plunged in reverie,
Gazed open eyed upon their flocks of sheep,
And wondered how the silly things could sleep,
Since Pan was dead. They watched the shadows pass
Across the fields of closely nibbled grass;
Unthinkingly they saw each hill and tree;
Their eyes dwelt vaguely on the strip of sea
Which, far away, divided earth and sky. . . .
Ah, what were they, when even Gods could die?

Then Chloe said, like one that speaks and dreams:
'So Pan is dead! How *very* strange it seems!
Gone is life's pleasure; dead is every joy.
This morning we were happy girl and boy,
And now—we are old people!'

Here she wept.
But Daphnis quietly towards her crept.
One hand upon her two clasped hands he placed,
Sliding a gentle arm about her waist,

And whispered: 'If all chance of bliss is o'er,
We two must love each other more and more
To compensate. Joy, banished from the earth,
May take a liking to our homely hearth,
And hide there from the vengeful Gods above.
Could you live happy in my faithful love,
Though Pan were dead?'

She answered doubtfully:
'But who will keep you always true to me?
He was the shepherd's patron, kind and grim;
If you proved false, I could have prayed to him;
But now who 'll keep you?'

Daphnis cried: 'Why you!
We each will help the other to be true.'

After a brief reflection, Chloe said:
'Of course, it may be false that Pan is dead.
He surely was too great a God to fall.
I don't believe that he is dead at all.
And if he *really* is—ah, well, then we
Must try to make our own felicity.
A mortal, I could never marry Pan;
Besides, 'twas not for God I yearned, but man.
We 'll love so truly he will ne'er be missed!'

Smiling, yet shedding tears of joy, they kissed;
Then hand in hand danced down to tend the sheep,
Leaving Damoctas there alone to weep.

THE ARTIST AND THE VOICE

The Artist

THE old year fades, and with it goes away
A century of pleasure and of pain;
A century of change has ceased to-day . . .
A whirling carnival of loss and gain.

We are more learnèd than our fathers were,
Our feet have trod the earth from pole to pole;
We've tamed the lightning and explored the air,
And yet—what know we of the human soul?

For all our knowledge, still we do not know
What soul is, nor what life was meant to be.
We know that life is dreary here below . . .
But what awaits us when the soul is free?

Another year to live through, long and sad,
Certain to be more dark than that gone by.
More care and sorrow . . . nay, I should go mad!
Why wait, when 'tis an easy thing to die?

So easy! just a tiny leaden ball,
And I shall fly from realms of earthly pain;
A poisoned beaker, and I'm free from all
The trouble I would never see again.

Give me the cup. To-night shall be my last.
I shall awake beneath a softer sky.
My blood is running joyously and fast—
Of human deeds the happiest is to die.

But ere I perish, I must bid farewell
Unto my often faithless friend, my art.
Before I loose the doors of Heaven or Hell,
I 'll stir with music the night's aching heart.

THE VOICE

Thou still dost think thou art the salt of earth,
Dost think that life hangs on thy yea or nay.
What canst thou know of death or know of birth,
Or know of life, its purposes or its worth,
Thou, who wouldst speed thy spirit from its clay?

Thou *canst* not kill thyself. Nay, though thy will
Were firmly fixed, thy hand hath not the power
To make thy wondrous vital being still,
Before thy soul hath drunk her utmost fill
Of love, and pain, and suffering, and power.

What! wouldst thou slay the pleasure of thine ear?
Wouldst thou destroy the gloating of thine eye?
Before the angels of thy death appear
To bear thee hence, through many a golden year
Thy life must wander 'neath the rapturous sky.

Thou canst not kill thyself; no drug nor knife
To-night can stifle thy great gift of breath.
Art thou a coward to turn thy back on life,
Thou who art strong for love and toil and strife?
'Tis long ere thou shalt be the prey of death.

THE ARTIST

This poor old life, I know it all so well!
It winds and winds in never-ending chain
Unto the last inevitable knell . . .
And yet I loved it once, despite its pain.

If I could taste the joyousness of youth,
If I again could be an eager boy;
If all our lovely fairy-tales were truth,—
Then life would seem a something to enjoy.

THE VOICE

Dost thou forget how with each passing year
Thy heart leapt up with pride and pleasure blent
To feel that glorious manhood was more near?
Why shouldst thou squander a regret or tear
On days which did not bring thee full content?

THE ARTIST

My vanished years were like a long sweet dream . . .

THE VOICE

Thou hast forgot the trouble and the fret.

THE ARTIST

But now I cannot see the faintest gleam
Of sunlight on life's murky dusky stream.

THE VOICE

Wouldst thou be happier if thou couldst forget?

Think! would thy existence really happier be
If all thy past should now become a blank?
Wouldst thou forget the splendour of the sea,
The wondrous loves whom life hath given to thee,
The precious lives whom love would have thee thank?

One person only hath the right to slay
Himself, and he a person not yet found.
One who hath never known the wish to play,
Hath loathed the night and spurned the radiant day,
And cursed all life to its remotest bound.

But thou—why, thou art filled with fierce desire
For earthly joy with every passion rife.
Thou wouldst commune with kisses fierce as fire,
Not caring though the ways be foul with mire
Which lead unto thy pleasures in this thy life.

'Tis life thou wantest, life, and evermore
More life, which hath no kinship unto death—
As greedy as the ocean for the shore!
By all the mystic pleasures known of yore
Surely thou art not weary of thy breath?

Wouldst have a life of days without a night,
Or life of nights without a single day?
The lark is often wearied in his flight,
But singeth on, for all his vague affright,
To usher in the splendour of the May.

THE ARTIST

I know the specious sophistries of yore;
But reasoning is too cold to soothe our pain;
'Tis too abstract to reach the inmost core
Of soul, and give to life her worth again.

THE VOICE

Think of the perfect gladness of the earth,
Which blooms anew for every coming year.
She bears alike the pain of death and birth,
Yet beams for ever with the tranquil mirth
Which mortals feel between a smile and tear.

Think of the far-extending universe;
Its vast tranquillity despite the storms
Which strive to turn its evil into worse—
And learn from it to love and not to curse.—
Beauty is calm in its more perfect forms.

THE ARTIST

My soul is bathed in a sweet reverie,
Music has healed my heart with her sweet balm.
I look with hope upon the year to be,
And on the past with acquiescent calm.

The Voice

Thank God with all thine inmost reverent breath
For Art, who cometh from the skies above.
Who tells thee all the ancient wisdom saith,
Who hymns thy birth and sanctifies thy death,
And guides thee in the realms of perfect love.

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